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ANNEX 4 (116(i))

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INCOMING TELEGRAM

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Rec'd August 3, 1947
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FROM: London

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 4214, August 3, 1 p.m.

US URGENT

FOR THE SECRETARY'S EYES ONLY FROM DOUGLAS

On my return from visit with the Secretary of War Friday evening and Saturday morning in Germany, I delivered to Bevin your message (DEPTEL 3305, August 1). I also presented orally the considerations outlined in your telegram 3304, August 1, and elaborated, in respect of proposed withdrawal of British troops from Greece and Italy, on the very serious consequences which such withdrawal might now produce throughout western Europe.

Bevin replied as follows:

One. That the precise extent of the reduction in overseas forces had not yet been definitely fixed, but that it might involve a shrinkage from a figure approximating 1,250,000 to somewhere between 900,000 and slightly over a million.

Two. This reduction in the overseas forces does not imply any change whatsoever in the British foreign policy. If, Bevin said, any change were at any time contemplated he would give us ample notice and full opportunity for consultation.

Three. It is very unlikely that in the forthcoming debate on the state of the nation commencing Wednesday and lasting through Thursday any Minister of the Government will mention the reduction of forces in any particular theater. Announcement of the reduction in forces will probably be in total figures without reference to specific areas and without specifying the number of troops in any theater, or the number of troops remaining after the cuts in any theater.

Four. Should the Cabinet plans be modified and should it be planned to refer to a cut in any particular theater, we

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will be notified, but it is very improbable that there will be any such change.

Five. It will probably be announced by the Government in the forthcoming debate that a certain part of the reduction in the overseas forces will be made by the first of December or the first of the year and the balance by spring.

Six. These reductions in overseas forces are being made as a contribution by the military establishments to the economic crisis.

Seven. As to Greece, Bevin asks that he be informed as promptly as possible as to the period of time which you have in mind for the retention of British forces there. (He does not now contemplate the withdrawal of the British Military Mission).

Eight. As to Italy, Bevin is conscious of the agreement to which you refer in your message. The consequences of any action taken under it will be considered by the Cabinet, and before any final decision is made Bevin will communicate with us again.

From my conversations with members of the Labor Parliamentary group left and right, as well as from my knowledge of the views of members of the Liberal Party and a few members of the Conservative Party, the reduction in overseas forces is a response to a widely held view in Britain, quite irrespective of party affiliations. It is fair to say, however, that the reductions which Bevin has in mind are substantially less than the reductions advocated by the left wing back benchers.

DOUGLAS

JRL:PAL